

# **NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL**

## **Monterey, California**



## **THESIS**

**ENTANGLED IN SOUTHERN LEBANON: ISRAEL, IRAN,  
SYRIA AND HIZBOLLAH**

by

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December 1999

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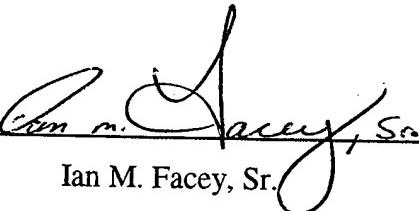
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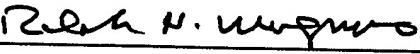
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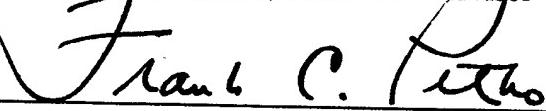
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## **ABSTRACT**

Israel invaded Lebanon in 1978 and 1982 with the intention of destroying the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) infrastructure. Hizbollah has attempted to fill the vacuum that was created by the removal of the PLO from Lebanon. In an effort to neutralize Hizbollah and obtain a secure northern border, the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) has undertaken many military operations that in the end have appeared to be counter-productive. These operations have only served as a catalyst for reciprocal battles between the IDF and Hizbollah. The purpose of this thesis is to examine and analyze why Israel's military efforts in southern Lebanon have failed to achieve a secure and peaceful northern border and argue it is time to end the Israeli-Lebanon conflict via diplomatic efforts.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The Middle East has always been a volatile region, but since the creation of the state of Israel in 1948, the region has been engulfed in a series of bitter conflicts between Israel and its Arab neighbors. These conflicts have pushed this volatility to new heights. As a direct result of the Israeli war for statehood and independence, more than 500,000 Palestinians were displaced from their homeland.<sup>1</sup> These displaced Palestinian refugees sought refuge throughout the Arab world, thus exacerbating the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Although the Arab world sympathized with the plight of the Palestinians, many Arab countries were reluctant to accept and accommodate them.<sup>2</sup> The reluctance to integrate the disaffected Palestinians into their economies essentially forced a majority of the refugees to live in

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<sup>1</sup> Bryan Daves and David Tarr, *The Middle East*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed., (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly, 1986), 16.

<sup>2</sup> The prominent reason why the Arab world was reluctant to integrate the Palestinian refugees into their economies was the fear that their presence would strain the economy resulting in political instability.

the disaffected Palestinians into their economies essentially forced a majority of the refugees to live in crowded refugee camps governed by the United Nations (UN) under the banner of United Nations Relief Works Agency (UNRWA).<sup>3</sup> These camps later evolved into permanent communities that caused continued problems for Israel and its neighbors, mainly Jordan and Lebanon.

These refugee camps were the breeding ground for the Palestinian resistance movement. Some Palestinian refugees, weary of waiting for a diplomatic solution to their predicament resorted to an armed struggle against the Israelis.<sup>4</sup> In 1964, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) emerged and the Palestinian resistance stepped up its intensity. The Palestinians residing in Jordan and the West Bank and Gaza began to conduct numerous raids into Israel, thus antagonizing the Israelis into responding with their military strength

After years of Israeli reprisals, Jordan's King Hussein ordered his military to stop the PLO from raiding Israel. In September 1970, his military engaged the PLO in fierce and bloody battles that resulted in the death of many

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<sup>3</sup> Tabitha Petran, *The Struggle Over Lebanon* (New York, NY: Monthly Review Press, 1987), 73.

<sup>4</sup> The Palestinian resistance movement was an armed struggle that incorporated terrorist tactics in the hope of achieving its goal, the liberation of Palestine.

Palestinians. The Palestinians called this event Black September. By 1971, Jordan had successfully eliminated the PLO threat in Jordan. As a result of Black September, PLO members that were not killed or imprisoned by the Jordanian military migrated to Lebanon. There the PLO reorganized and set up their military activities within the established refugee camps. After their expulsion from Jordan, Lebanon became the only place in the Arab world that the PLO could mount their raids against Israel.

Shortly after migrating from Jordan and establishing their new residence in southern Lebanon, the PLO acquired control of the refugee camps. Under their control, some of the refugee camps were converted into military training bases.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, the PLO expanded their sphere of influence and gained access to set up training camps outside the refugee camps, such as in the Beqaa valley. Upon expanding their influence throughout southern Lebanon the Palestinians literally established a state within a state.<sup>6</sup>

The Palestinian fighters mounted numerous cross-border attacks from southern Lebanon into Israel. These attacks provoked Israeli reprisals. Israel often retaliated via air

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<sup>5</sup> Yair Evron, *War and Intervention in Lebanon* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 9.

<sup>6</sup> Hala Jaber, *Hezbollah: Born with a Vengeance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 20.

strikes and artillery bombardments. The Israelis targeted the Palestinian refugee camps, but local Lebanese villages also were often hit. As the Palestinian raids increased and the Israeli raids became more severe, resentment and tension began to rise amongst local Lebanese inhabitants, particularly the Shi'a community that populated the southern part of Lebanon. There were mixed feelings about the inept Lebanese government and Lebanese population regarding the status of the PLO. While many Lebanese sympathized with the plight of the Palestinians, a growing faction felt that the burden their presence imposed on Lebanon was too severe.

By 1975, relations between the PLO and different Lebanese groups became so intense that fighting erupted. The conflict that ensued was a turning point in Lebanese history as it virtually paralyzed the once prosperous state and left it in disarray. Although there are different accounts of what caused the Lebanese Civil War in 1975, many scholars agree that the Palestinian resistance movement was certainly the proximate cause.

As the Lebanese Civil War waned and the internal fighting decreased toward 1977, the PLO refocused their energy and stepped up their hostilities towards Israel. The PLO hostilities continued unabated until March 12, 1978 when the Israeli Defense Force entered Lebanon. This military operation was codenamed "Operation Litani". During this

operation the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) moved into Lebanon with the intent of driving the PLO away from Israel's northern border. In the process, Israel established a security area several kilometers deep inside southern Lebanon.<sup>7</sup> This Israeli invasion of southern Lebanon garnered international attention and resulted in United Nations Security Council intervention. UN Security Council Resolution 425 was drafted which called for Israeli withdrawal and established an international peacekeeping force for southern Lebanon.<sup>8</sup> A short time after United Nations Interim Forces (UNIFIL) arrived in Lebanon to supervise the Israeli withdrawal, the IDF began a phased withdrawal.<sup>9</sup>

The Palestinians continued the cycle of cross border attacks despite the presence of UNIFIL forces and the South Lebanese Army (SLA)<sup>10</sup>. By 1982, the Israeli government

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<sup>7</sup> Antoine Abraham, *The Lebanon War* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1986), 109.

<sup>8</sup> The United Nations Interim Force was set up with the mandate to confirm the withdrawal of Israeli forces from southern Lebanon and to restore international peace and security. It has not been possible for UNIFIL to carry out its mandate because the force has had to operate under extremely difficult conditions. Israel never accepted the UNIFIL mandate and, therefore, UNIFIL was prevented from fully deploying in the area occupied by the Israelis. The area that Israel occupied was turned over to the Christian and associated militias supported by Israel.

<sup>9</sup> The SLA is an Israeli sponsored Lebanese militia. The SLA occupied several kilometers along the Israel-Lebanon border after the IDF withdrew its forces in 1978.

<sup>10</sup> Daves, 175.

decided to invade Lebanon and remove the PLO threat permanently. One of the Israeli governments proclaimed reasons for invading Lebanon in 1982 was based on the premise that the PLO acquired long-range artillery and rocket launchers. The Israeli political and military leaders believed that the advancement of PLO military equipment posed a serious threat to Israel's security.

This thesis will examine and analyze why Israel's military efforts in southern Lebanon have failed to achieve a secure and peaceful northern border and argue that the time is ripe to end the Israeli-Lebanon conflict via a diplomatic solution. In addition, it will assess the interests and political objectives of each of the four parties involved in the southern Lebanon dilemma: Israel, Syria, Iran and Hizbollah.

Chapter II will examine the roots of the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, "Operation Peace for Galilee." Further it will be argued that Operation Peace for Galilee created more problems than it solved, thus entrenching Israel in Lebanon indefinitely.

In Chapter III, the formation of the Islamic Resistance Movement, Hizbollah will be examined, along with the organization ideology and goals. In addition, I contend that Israel's military campaigns against Hizbollah only serve as a catalyst for increasing the Shi'a resentment for

Israeli military presence in Lebanon. Further, these military operations invite Hizbollah resistance fighters to step up their attacks on IDF soldiers in the security zone and launch katyushas rockets at Israeli settlements.

Chapter IV will analyze the role of Syria in the Israeli-Lebanese conflict. It will concentrate on the influence that Syria has in Lebanese politics and how its interests impact the Israeli-Lebanese peace process.

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## **II ISRAEL'S 1982 INVASION OF LEBANON: A ROAD TO DISASTER**

Despite the presence of the UN forces and their attempts to halt the Israeli advance into Lebanon, IDF troops in tanks and trucks stormed across the Lebanese border on June 6, 1982. Israel's brutal invasion of Lebanon was codenamed "Peace for Galilee" and this operation marked a turning point of Israel's involvement in Lebanon.<sup>11</sup> As it would turn out later, Israel would learn that Lebanon was much easier to enter than to exit. Operation Peace for Galilee was also the fifth war that Israel was involved in since it was founded in 1948.<sup>12</sup> The 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon also sparked international attention that condemned Israel's infringement upon Lebanon's sovereignty and thus set the stage for Western military presence.

### **A. CRUCIAL POLITICAL CHANGES THAT LEAD ISREAL TO WAR**

In June 1981, a year prior to the 1982 invasion of Lebanon, Israeli politics underwent a transformation. It

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<sup>11</sup> There are comparisons to America's involvement in Vietnam. Similar to the experience of the U.S. three decades ago, Israel is involved in a bitter war. As the casualty rate increases, so does the opposition to the government's policy.

<sup>12</sup> Martin Gilbert, *Israel* (New York, N.Y.: William Morrow and Company, 1998), 504. Gilbert argues that this war was unique to Israel in that unlike previous wars, there was no national consensus. Further, he asserts that it was the Israeli war that has generated the most internal conflict and a war that many Israelis regarded as a war of aggression.

was during this general election that the Likud party prevailed in winning a majority of the seats in the Knesset.<sup>13</sup> The Likud party victory afforded Prime Minister Menachem Begin the opportunity to reshape his government. Furthermore,

Gone were Weizman, Yadin, and Dayan, the experienced pragmatists who had nudged Begin toward peace with Egypt on the basis of a West Bank autonomy and a complete withdrawal from the Sinai. Their place in the inner circle of government was taken by tough-minded hawks (including opponents of the peace with Egypt) such as Itzhak Shamir, Moshe Arens, Yoram Aridor, and of course Ariel Sharon. In fact Begin had replaced the hard core of cautious pragmatists by a group of tougher, less experienced ministers.<sup>14</sup>

These cabinet changes which included the appointment of Ariel Sharon as Minister of Defense, certainly implied that Begin had designed a "War Cabinet" and essentially decided to lead Israel to war in Lebanon. Although Prime Minister Begin had served as a commander of the Irgun prior to Israel's formation, he had very little formal military training. Due to his lack of military experience, he was a "complete dilettante when it came to matters martial."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> The Knesset is the Israeli Parliament. There are 120 available seats and its members are elected for 4 years by proportional representation. In order to obtain a majority of seats the Likud party secured a strong coalition with other parties.

<sup>14</sup> Avner Yaniv, *Dilemmas Of Security* (New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1987), 92.

<sup>15</sup> Thomas Davis, *40Km Into Lebanon: Israel's 1982 Invasion* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1987), 65. Irgun was an armed Jewish underground movement that was committed to establishing a Jewish state.

Despite the fact that Ariel Sharon had a controversial military record, Begin acquiesced to considerable pressure and proceeded to appoint Sharon as his Minister of Defense. Prior to Begin's reelection in June 1981, Sharon had served as Agricultural Minister. In order to understand that the appointment of Ariel Sharon as Minister of Defense reinforces the argument that Begin was consciously headed for war, a review of Sharon's background is required.

Ariel Sharon was born in 1928 with the name Ariel Shinerman. His place of birth was Kafr Malal in Palestine. Upon completing high school, he joined the Haganah underground.<sup>16</sup> He then served as a Jewish Settlement Police Officer until the 1948 war. He participated in the 1948 war for Israeli independence as a squad commander in the Field Corps. Within a short period he acquired the rank of platoon commander and was severely wounded in a battle. As a result of this traumatic experience, "according to one informed source, Sharon subsequently developed many of his own ideas about the conduct of war...."<sup>17</sup> After the war, he continued his service in the Army and later became an intelligence officer and then head of a secret retaliation

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<sup>16</sup> Yaniv, 93.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. 93.

unit named Detachment 101.<sup>18</sup> The unit prospered under the command of Sharon and the unit was known throughout the IDF as a professional pace setter. However, Detachment 101's success was short lived due to Sharon's ruthlessness. In response to a PLO attack on an Israeli village which resulted in the death of a woman and two children, Detachment 101 was tasked with a reprisal raid on a West Bank Palestinian village. Detachment 101 carried out the mission. However, the unit killed more than fifty men, women and children.<sup>19</sup> Due to this event, the United Nations and the international community condemned Israel's actions. Despite the embarrassment to Israel's international reputation and the fact that the Prime Minister was outraged, Sharon was never reprimanded.

During the 1956 Suez crisis, Sharon acted beyond his orders. Instead of sending a reconnaissance patrol as requested through a narrow pass,

Sharon sent a large task force consisting of two paratrooper companies mounted on Armored Personnel Carriers (APCs). The force did not know that five Egyptian companies were hiding in the caves overlooking the pass.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Unit 101 was an elite unit dedicated to leading retaliatory strikes against the Palestinian fighters attacking Israel from Gaza and the West Bank.

<sup>19</sup> Avner, 93.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

Sharon led his men right into the hands of the Egyptians which resulted in a high casualty count of his soldiers. Shortly after this incident, Sharon was relieved of his command and sent to England to further his studies. Upon his return from England, he was appointed to marginal positions under Chiefs of Staff Laskov and Tzur until Itzhak Rabin assumed the position of Chief of Staff, in 1964.

Despite Sharon's military blunders and known deceitfulness, he was able to obtain the rank of Major General prior to his retirement in 1973. It appears that one of the reasons he acquired the rank of General was that there were some influential people such as Prime Minister Ben Gurion who liked Sharon's aggressive ruthless style. It was reported that Prime Minister Ben Gurion, prior to resigning in 1963 spoke with Itzhak Rabin (appointed Chief of Staff 1964) and said,

I have a special attitude to Sharon. I view him as one of the best soldiers and as one of the most ferocious fighters we have. If only he could speak the truth it would help his prospects for promotion. I beg you not to treat him as he has been treated in the past.<sup>21</sup>

By his own admission, Sharon was eager to invade Lebanon to wipe out the PLO. Shortly after being appointed Minister of Defense Sharon began to draft his war strategy.<sup>22</sup> This

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 96.

<sup>22</sup> Hillel Schenker, *After Lebanon* (New York, N.Y.: Pilgrim Press, 1983), 11.

strategy became known as the "Sharon Plan." And Sharon simply waited for the justification that would follow a year later to implement it.

Although the Israel-Lebanon border had been relatively quiet since the cease-fire agreement of July 26, 1981, Begin and Sharon during the latter part of that same year tried to convince other Knesset members on several occasions without any success to approve a military operation in Lebanon.<sup>23</sup> During December 1981, Begin held a special cabinet meeting that included the presentation of Sharon's war plan. To their surprise, the cabinet rejected the idea. "Confronted with this unexpected obstacle Begin adjourned the meeting without taking a vote."<sup>24</sup> Although frustrated with the cabinet's decision, Begin and Sharon continued their efforts to obtain the cabinet's approval for a war in Lebanon. They attempted to obtain the cabinet's approval in April 1982 after an Israeli diplomat was shot in Paris, France. Instead, they had to settle for a large-scale air raid on West Beirut.

Begin and Sharon's quest for a large-scale invasion of Lebanon would soon come. On June 3, 1982, the Israeli

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<sup>23</sup> The July 1981 cease-fire agreement was mediated by U.S. special envoy Philip Habib. Israel and the PLO respected the agreement for approximately ten months before hostilities resumed.

<sup>24</sup> Yaniv, 107.

Ambassador to Great Britain, Shlomo Argov, was shot. Fortunately, Argov survived, but he was paralyzed. The Mossad, Israel's intelligence agency, informed Prime Minister Begin that the attempt on Argov was a provocation against Yasser Arafat by Abu Nidal's Fatah organization (a known enemy of Yasser Arafat's PLO). Begin cleverly manipulated this fact as not to affect the cabinet member's decision to authorize a military response on the PLO in Lebanon. This manipulation occurred during the special cabinet meeting on June 4 1982, when Gideon Machanaimi, Begin's adviser on the war against terrorism began to inform the Israeli cabinet members about the perpetrators of Argov's attempted assassination by Abu Nidal.<sup>25</sup> Begin quickly ended Machanaimi's speech by stating, "They are all PLO."<sup>26</sup> Had the Cabinet members been thoroughly briefed on the readily available information such as the facts that the Abu Nidal was in no way affiliated with Yasser Arafat's PLO and that he was an arch rival of Yasser Arafat, the decision to launch an invasion on Lebanon may not have been approved. Thus the dilemma that Israel faces today could have possibly been prevented.

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 110.

<sup>26</sup> Ze'ev Schiff and Ehud Ya'ari, *Israel's Lebanon War* (New York, N.Y.: Simon and Schuster, 1984), 98.

Enraged by the Argov incident, like many Israelis at the time,

Begin convened the cabin and offered it Little Pines, (a twenty-five mile incursion). The cabinet approved the plan by fourteen votes to two and within two days the IDF, including many reserve personnel, was ordered to cross into Lebanon.<sup>27</sup>

Ariel Sharon informed the Cabinet that the IDF would not advance more than 25 miles into Lebanon, would not engage Syrian troops and that the operation would last approximately three days.<sup>28</sup> Twenty-seven years have since passed and the IDF is still in Lebanon.

#### **B. GOALS OF THE INVASION**

The primary goal of the invasion was to destroy the PLO, which dominated southern Lebanon and harassed Israel's northern border. The secondary goals were to implant a pro-Israeli government under the Maronite Phalange leader Bashir Gemayel, and to diminish Syrian influence in Lebanon. These goals were articulated clearly when Sharon stated,

Israel's objective is to see it that Lebanon becomes an independent state that will live with us in peace and be an integral part of the free world, as well as to solve the problem of the Syrian presence in that country.<sup>29</sup>

Virtually, every aspect of the campaign failed to impose a new order in Lebanon as these goals had intended to create.

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 110.

<sup>28</sup> Martin Gilbert, *Israel* (New York, N.Y.: William and Morrow, 1998), 504.

<sup>29</sup> Schiff, 42.

Things went terribly wrong from the beginning. Despite the fact that the PLO was no match for Israel's Army, Air Force and Navy the Palestinian resistance fighters slowed down the Israeli advance. According to Schiff and Ya'ari "It took the cream of the IDF's men-the Golani Infantry Brigade, veteran paratroops, and an armored force-two whole days to overcome the PLO stronghold in Sidon."<sup>30</sup> The IDF has been bombing, shelling and attacking Lebanon for more than thirty years and it has occupied parts of southern Lebanon for over 21 years. Yet the longer this military struggle continues, the less Israel achieves and the more skilled the Lebanese resistance becomes.

Although Operation Peace for Galilee succeeded in reducing the PLO military threat along Israel's northern border, it did not eliminate the PLO entirely. The operation only succeeded in forcing the majority of PLO fighters to flee southern Lebanon and move to Tunisia, where they re-grouped and continued to battle the Israeli's. Ironically, Operation Peace for Galilee aided the PLO's political struggle. The highly publicized plight of the Palestinians garnered world attention for the Palestinian cause. The international community criticized Israel for its invasion of Lebanon, thus showing sympathy for the Palestinian resistance movement. Furthermore, during the

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 37.

IDF's siege of Beirut, the PLO negotiated through intermediaries such as Ambassador Philip Habib of the United States. The negotiations that occurred through Ambassador Habib were conceived by Israel and many others as United States political recognition of the PLO.

The goal of implanting a pro-Israeli government in Lebanon never materialized either. Although the pro-Israeli, anti-Syrian Maronite Phalange leader Bashir Gemayel was elected Lebanon's President during August 1982, as the "Sharon Plan" had envisioned, he was assassinated one month later on September 14, 1982, prior to his inauguration. His death shattered the dream of having an Israeli aligned Lebanese government. Within a few weeks of Bashir's assassination the National Assembly elected as President, Bashir's brother, Amin Gemayel.

The objective of diminishing the Syrian influence in Lebanon also failed. In fact the Peace for Galilee operation may have actually strengthened Syria's influence. Despite the fact that the Syrian military sustained heavy personnel and equipment losses in the numerous engagements with the IDF, the IDF was unsuccessful in its quests to drive the Syrians out of Lebanon. The Syrian military hindered the IDF's progress in their movement to Beirut. Furthermore, within a short time after Amin Gemayel assumed the Presidency of Lebanon, the Syrian President Hafez Assad,

through intimidation, was able to strengthen his hold on Lebanon.

**C. ISRAELI REACTION TO THE DEATH OF BASHIR GEMAYEL**

By mid-June 1982, three months prior to the assassination of Lebanese President-elect Bashir Gemeyal, the IDF encircled Beirut. Although Israeli ground forces did not enter the city, the IDF bombarded PLO positions with munitions from the air and ground. The bombardments not only inflicted PLO casualties, but also numerous civilian casualties. According to Martin Gilbert, "The daily television transmission of Israeli artillery bombarding Beirut...including on one occasion serious damage to a hospital, caused much harm to Israel's international image...."<sup>31</sup> This harm to Israel's international image by the bombardment of Beirut was minimal compared to the event that occurred after the death of Bashir. Throughout this period of heavy Israeli bombardment of Beirut, American Ambassador Philip Habib arranged a settlement whereby the PLO agreed to leave Lebanon. The agreement also stipulated that a Multi-National Force (MNF) would supervise the evacuation to ensure the protection of the PLO. By early September, the evacuation of the PLO was complete.

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<sup>31</sup> Gilbert, 508.

On September 15, 1982, the day after Bashir Gemayel was assassinated, the Israeli government authorized the IDF to enter Beirut against the strong opposition of the United States.<sup>32</sup> The IDF surrounded two Palestinian refugee camps called Sabra and Shatila. Although Israeli troops did not enter these camps, the IDF provided illumination and allowed Israeli-supported Phalangist forces to enter them. The Phalangist forces massacred over 2000 Palestinian men, women and children.<sup>33</sup> The massacre of innocent Palestinian civilians at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps caused an outcry in Israel and in the international community. The public outcry within Israel resulted in a demonstration on September 25, 1982 in Tel Aviv which over 400,000 people participated.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, the Sabra and Shatila event resulted in the formation of an independent Israeli commission headed by Israeli Supreme Court Justice Yitzhak Kahan. Although the findings of the commission concluded "no intention existed on the part of any Israeli element to harm the non-combatant population in the camps,"<sup>35</sup> it criticized the Director of Israeli Military Intelligence, Yehoshua Saguy, Defense Minister Sharon, and even Prime

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<sup>32</sup> Davis, 102.

<sup>33</sup> Gilbert, 509.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

Minister Menachem Begin. The Sabra and Shatila incident marked the turning point of Operation Peace for Galilee and the rise of opposition to the war.

#### D. OPPOSITION TO THE WAR

Israeli internal opposition to the 1982 invasion of Lebanon first surfaced at the onset of Operation Peace for Galilee. However, as time passed and the Lebanon situation became more chaotic, erosion intensified against support for the goals of the Israeli-Lebanese war. Opposition groups, such as Peace Now and the Committee Against the War in Lebanon, began voicing their concerns as the Israeli casualties started mounting. Other groups also began forming when it became clear that the objective of the invasion exceeded the government's declared goal of driving the PLO 40 kilometers into Lebanon, beyond artillery range of northern Israel. Hillel Schenker highlighted this point when he wrote:

As the excesses of the war became known, and the government pushed the IDF way beyond its declared goals...an act which was supposed to be accomplished in 'twenty-four to forty-eight hours,' opposition to the war began to grow both at the home front and on the front lines.<sup>35</sup>

The Peace Now Movement organized an anti-war rally during July 1982 that was attended by over 100,000 demonstrators.

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 510.

<sup>36</sup> Schenker, 17.

Since no such protest in wartime had been mounted before in Israeli history, this rally clearly expressed that there was no national consensus behind Prime Minister Begin's policy for war in Lebanon.<sup>37</sup>

The most surprising and unexpected opposition to the war, however, came from some IDF soldiers. According to the Israeli Army, 140 soldiers opted to go to jail instead of serving in Lebanon.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, some soldiers serving on the front lines expressed their protest against the war, too. These soldiers expressed their feelings against the war in the form of petitions to cabinet members, the media and even to Prime Minister Begin. A letter was sent to the Prime Minister signed by officers and enlisted personnel, serving on the front lines that expressed their discontent with the war. It read:

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>38</sup> Mary Cutius, "Pullout from Lebanon Leaves Israeli's Bitter and Divided," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 4 June 1985, 1.

Mr. Prime Minister, This is not what I volunteered to the special unit for. It was clear to me that if I were called to a war it would be a just war to defend our lives and existence as a nation. This time I went to a war whose declared purpose was to remove the terrorists 40 km. Further from the settlements in the North. Today it is clear to me that I was deceived and called to the first war in the history of Israel which was not a defensive war but a dangerous gamble on achieving political goals-a gamble for which the IDF paid a heavy price in human life, and for which innocent civilians were hurt. This step establishes a dangerous precedent and causes severe damage to our image, our moral strength, and to the prospects for peace in this blood-drenched region. I want you to know that the voices of those who speak against the war not only do not discourage me, but are, in fact, what give me strength out there in the battlefield, knowing that sanity and humanism still exist back home. Even now I continue to obey my commanders' orders, knowing that I am risking my life in a war which I do not believe is just. I have no faith in the Minister of Defense!!!<sup>39</sup>

The soldiers that expressed their discontent with the war effort in Lebanon formed Soldiers Against Silence. The main goals of the movement were to receive the resignation of Defense Minister Ariel Sharon and put an end to the war in Lebanon.<sup>40</sup> Although the opponents of the war were unsuccessful in ending Israel's involvement in Lebanon, they succeeded in pressuring the Begin administration to appoint an independent commission (Kahan mentioned earlier) to investigate the Sabra and Shatila massacres. The Commission's findings, released in February 1983, forced Defense Minister Sharon to step down from his post. He did not officially resign and remained in the Cabinet as a

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

Minister without Portfolio. Prime Minister Begin also resigned.

#### **E. ISRAEL'S LEBANON POLICY AFTER THE RESIGNATION OF PRIME MINISTER MENACHEM BEGIN**

When Begin resigned from the government in late 1983, Yitzhak Shamir assumed the post of Prime Minister. By June 1985, Israel had withdrawn most of its troops from Lebanon. The IDF troops that remained were stationed in the self-proclaimed 'security zone' in southern Lebanon.<sup>41</sup> Israel's rationale for maintaining the security zone was to protect its northern villages from terrorist attacks. Very little has changed since the IDF withdrew to the security zone in 1985. Pressure for withdrawal has continued to grow in light of the increased frequency of attacks and growing IDF casualty rates. The debate over whether the IDF should stay or withdraw from Lebanon, remains a central issue within Israel and its neighbors.

In the final analysis, Operation Peace for Galilee not only failed to provide long-term security for Israel's northern border, but it also created a long-term problem for Israel. As the years passed by, the security zone became more problematic. The 1982 invasion also spawned a new

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<sup>41</sup> The security zone is a region of southern Lebanon that Israel has occupied in one form or another since the 1978 invasion. It encompasses a strip of land that is approximately three to five miles deep along the length of the Lebanese-Israeli border.

enemy in southern Lebanon. Further, the new enemy, Hezbollah, sought to drive Israeli forces out of southern Lebanon and as a consequence of their resistance, Israel has invested heavily in strengthening its position in southern Lebanon.

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### III. THE EMERGENCE OF HIZBOLLAH

Hizbollah is one of the most significant independent militant movements based in the Middle East.<sup>42</sup> Hizbollah, translated into English, means the "Party of God." It is a Shi'ite Muslim militant, political, and social movement that evolved in response to the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon. In the eyes of the West, Hizbollah is the embodiment of "Islamic terrorism." However, in the hearts of many Lebanese, Hizbollah is viewed as legitimate resistance fighters battling to liberate Lebanon from foreign occupation.

Shortly after the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, Hizbollah, an Islamic freedom fighting movement, emerged. The organization was established under the banner of Islam as an organizational body for Shi'ite fundamentalists. The movement was led by a group of clerics who aspired to liberate Lebanon from the occupying aggressive Israeli forces. Further, these clerics wanted to resolve Lebanon's social and political problems through establishing a theocratic government

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<sup>42</sup> The Islamic fundamentalist organization, Hizbollah, (Hizbullah, Hezbollah, spelling dependent upon translation) has operated under other names such as the Islamic Resistance Revolutionary Justice Organization, Organization of the Oppressed on Earth, Islamic Jihad for the Liberation of Palestine, and the Party of God.

#### A. TRANSFORMATION OF LEBANON'S SHI'ITES

Transformation of Lebanon's Shi'a community began with Afwaj al-Muqawama al-Lubnaniya (Amal). Amal, also referred to as the Movement of the Deprived was founded by Imam Musa al-Sadr in the early 1970's. Imam Musa was a Shi'a cleric born to Lebanese parents in Qum, Iran.<sup>43</sup> He moved to Lebanon in 1958. This move was prompted when the Shi'a community requested that he replace the deceased mufti (religious leader) Abd al-Hussein Sharaf al-Din.<sup>44</sup>

Imam Musa al-Sadr sought the betterment of the Shi'a community in Lebanon. He asserted that the Lebanese government, which was controlled predominantly by the Maronite and Sunni sects, had neglected southern Lebanon which was populated mainly by Shi'ites. Furthermore, Palestinian refugees had been living in Lebanon dating back to the 1948 creation of Israel. After the PLO was expelled from Jordan in 1970, a majority of the PLO militiamen fled to southern Lebanon. Due to the influx of Palestinian militiamen, southern Lebanon became the center of Palestinian political and military operations. With the migration of PLO militiamen into Lebanon, raids across the Israeli border became frequent. As a result, the existing

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<sup>43</sup> Fouad Ajami, *The Vanished Imam* (Ithaca, NY.: Cornell University Press, 1986), 21.

<sup>44</sup> Augustus Norton, *Amal and the Shia* (Texas, TX: Texas Press, 1987), 39.

social and economic problems of the Shi'a was compounded by a rapidly deteriorating security environment in the South.<sup>45</sup>

The Lebanese government attempted to halt the PLO's military activities, but due to political and social divisions within the Lebanese population and government, the government attempt failed. Since the Lebanese government was unable to curtail PLO operations against Israel, southern Lebanon became a PLO base for launching attacks against Israel. When Israel retaliated, it was the Shi'a community that suffered the most. Imam Musa al-Sadr resented the fact that PLO activity exposed the Shi'a community to Israeli bombardments and resorted to providing protection for the Shi'a community. Imam Musa al-Sadr founded the Amal movement as a military force to provide this protection. For a myriad of reasons, such as the outbreak of civil war in Lebanon in 1975 that brought about a variety of militias, Amal's presence began to fade. It was not until after the mysterious disappearance of Imam Musa al-Sadr during a visit to Libya, and Israel's Operation Litani (the 1978 Israeli invasion of Lebanon) that Amal resurfaced again.

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 46

#### **B. SPLIT WITHIN AMAL**

Following Imam Musa al-Sadr's disappearance in the late 1970's, Nabih Berri assumed leadership of the Amal Movement in 1980. Berri's policies advocated negotiations and working within the Lebanese political system. Hussein Musawi, a high-ranking member of Amal's command council, along with a large proportion of the Shi'ite community, despised this and other moderate polices, of Nabih Berri's leadership. Furthermore, under Berri's leadership, Amal was viewed by many as accommodating to the Beirut regime, which disgusted many radical Shi'ite community members. Additionally, Berri tried to distance Amal from the Islamic Revolutionary ideas promoted by Iran. Due to the successful overthrow of the Shah and the establishment of an Islamic Republic in Iran by Ayatollah Khomeini, a majority of radical Shi'ite elements were inspired by the Islamic revolution and were longing for a hard-line stance which Musawi espoused.

Hussein Musawi's discontent with Amal's secular-minded leadership resulted in his decision to leave the organization. After departing Amal, Musawi established Islamic Amal. Shortly after establishing the Islamic Amal organization, Musawi, along with a group of radical Shi'ite clerics and Iranian Revolutionary Guards, organized a coalition of political and military cells that later became

known as Hizbollah, the Party of God.<sup>46</sup> The highest-ranking cleric official in the movement is Sheikh Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah and he is Hizbollah's "spiritual guide."<sup>47</sup>

During Israel's military Operation Peace for Galilee, the Iranian leader Ayatollah Khomeini dispatched approximately 1500 Revolutionary Guards to Bekaa Valley.<sup>48</sup> The purpose of the Israeli Operation Peace for Galilee was to remove the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) from Lebanon. Initially, many Shi'ites regarded the IDF's presence in southern Lebanon as a blessing. Under PLO domination, the Shi'ites of southern Lebanon were exploited and treated poorly. According to Hala Jaber, author of *Hizbollah: Born with a Vengeance*,

They were grateful to the liberators for freeing them from the heavy-handed Palestinian reign which had terrorized their villages and population for many years. The PLO had become a State-within-a-State in south Lebanon and its officials were accused of rape, robbery and extortion.

Unfortunately for the Israelis, the IDF did not withdraw after driving the PLO out of the south. The Shi'ites, after realizing that the Israelis were there to stay indefinitely,

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<sup>46</sup> "Hizballah", Available [Online]: <<http://almashriq.hiof.no/lebanon/300/320/324/324.2/hizballah.html>>, [15 Jun 99].

<sup>47</sup> "U.S. Policy on Terrorism-Part II Hizbollah and Liberation Tigers of Eelam", Available [Online]: <<http://www.idsa-india.org/an-nov8-7.html>>, [10 Apr 99].

<sup>48</sup> Jaber, 20.

turned their focus to removing the new occupying soldiers by force.

As mentioned earlier, Iran dispatched approximately 1500 Iranian Revolutionary Guards (Pasdaran-guardians of the revolution) to Lebanon. With the blessing of Syrian President Hafez Assad, the Revolutionary Guards trained Hezbollah fighters and reinforced Khomeini's Islamic revolutionary ideology.<sup>49</sup> Khomeini's main reason for sending the Revolutionary Guards to Bekaa Valley was to assist in the establishment of a revolutionary Islamic movement in Lebanon that would eventually establish a Lebanese Islamic Republic and participate in a holy war against Israel.<sup>50</sup>

#### **C. IDEOLOGY AND GOALS: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE**

During the early 1980's, when Hezbollah was in its infancy, the thrust and focus of Hezbollah's attention was directed towards expulsion of the Israeli occupying forces from Lebanon, ensuring that the PLO remained expelled, and improving social and political climate of the Shi'ite community. In addition, Hezbollah wanted an independent

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> "Hezbollah: Facing the Change", Available [Online]: <<http://almashriq.hiof.no/lebanon/300/320/324/324.2/hezbollah-960411.html>>, [10 Apr 99].

Lebanese state governed under the principles of Islam similar to that of Iran.<sup>51</sup>

Over the years, Hezbollah's ideology has changed from time to time. In 1985, the leaders of Hezbollah released their manifesto. The manifesto essentially outlined Hezbollah's agenda. It was distributed in the form of a booklet addressed as an open letter to the "Downtrodden in Lebanon."<sup>52</sup> The contents of the manifesto included a variety of details about the purpose of the organization. Additionally, the open letter also clarified Hezbollah's position toward Israel. They proclaimed in their manifesto that Israel was merely an American puppet. In addition, they espoused the view that Israel was a usurping enemy with expansionist ideas in Lebanon that could be traced back to their earlier occupation of Palestine. Furthermore, Hezbollah not only refused to acknowledge Israel's right to exist, but also pledged their commitment to fighting the usurping Zionists until they were obliterated.

Further, this open letter highlighted Hezbollah's affiliation with Iran and articulated a vehement anti-westernization sentiment. This sentiment was made clear during the 1980's when a suicide bomber blew up the U.S.

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<sup>51</sup> Yaniv, 233.

<sup>52</sup> Jaber, 54.

Embassy in Beirut. Shortly thereafter, the U.S Marine barracks and the Headquarters of the French forces were attacked in a similar manner. Two hundred and forty one American servicemen died in this event.<sup>53</sup> In addition, civilians associated with the West became victims of hostage taking in Lebanon. Pressured by these suicide attacks, the U.S. and France withdrew their forces from Lebanon.

It has became apparent during the last decade that Hizbollah has moderated their hard-line stance and focused its attention primarily on the following:

- Liberating Lebanon from Israeli occupation.
- Informing the Lebanese public of its cause and Israeli aggression through mass media.
- Improving the living conditions of the Lebanese people, mostly Shi'a practitioners, in south Lebanon.
- Providing assistance to families who, through Israeli attacks and assassinations, have lost their income earners.
- Provide housing to individuals who have been displaced because of Israeli bomb attacks.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Martin Kramer, "The Moral Logic of Hizballah." International Security Studies Program, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. Working Paper No. 84. Washington D.C. November 1987. Responsibility for the bombing was claimed by an unknown organization calling itself Islamic Jihad, but it became known later that it was the military wing of Hizbollah which used a different name to avoid taking direct responsibility.

<sup>54</sup> "Hizbollah: Party of God", Available [Online]: <[www.hizbollah.org](http://www.hizbollah.org)>, [15 Jun 99].

Hizbollah's leadership has continued to profess that one of the reasons they were formed was to liberate the Lebanese inhabitants from Israeli occupation, thus this has been and remains today, a priority. In order to counteract Israel's propaganda about Hizbollah's efforts and to promote Hizbollah's message amongst the Shi'ite community and the Lebanese population, Hizbollah has embarked upon the use of the media. One of the underlying principles of the movement is to raise the social standing of the Shi'ites of the south. To fulfill this, Hizbollah has invested money in revitalizing the southern Lebanon. Hizbollah realized early in their struggle that the departure of southern Lebanese villagers does not benefit Hizbollah's cause. It can be said that, "The success of the Islamic Resistance depends upon the co-operation and hospitality of the villagers as well as their support."<sup>55</sup> In order to assure the support and cooperation of southern Lebanese villagers, Hizbollah set up an extensive program of social services. Provided in these services are: three well equipped hospitals that provide low cost health care, supermarkets that provide food at reduced rates, and schools for impoverished children. Scholarships for college are also provided.<sup>56</sup> Through these

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<sup>55</sup> Jaber, 156.

<sup>56</sup> Nizar Hamzeh, "Lebanon's Hizbullah: From Islamic Revolution to Parliamentary Accommodation," *Third World Quarterly*, (Spring 1993): 150.

social services, Hizbollah has built a powerful presence in southern Lebanon. Additionally, Hizbollah financially compensates villagers for losses resulting from IDF military operations.

#### D. IRANIAN CONNECTION

Iran was instrumental in the establishment of Hizbollah. Iran has been, and still is, Hizbollah's primary sponsor. There is an ideological and emotional bond between the two. Hizbollah supports the tenet of clerical leadership that was espoused by Ayatollah Khomeini and formed the basis of the Iranian revolutionary regime. When Hizbollah was in its infancy in the early 1980's, its resources were very limited. It had a small amount of arms and no means of mass communication.<sup>57</sup> The most important factor that it had was Iran's backing that included spiritual, financial and military support.

The Iranian spiritual guidance has geared Hizbollah to incorporate, as part of its agenda, goals of an Iranian style Islamic revolution with a Lebanese accent. During the early years of Hizbollah, the financial contribution by the Iranians was significant. The generous financial backing from the Iranian government and the theological leadership afforded Hizbollah the ability to dramatically increase its

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 150.

membership and win the support of the Shi'ite community in southern Lebanon. Due to the impotent Lebanese government's ability to provide the basic necessities for the underprivileged Shi'a community, Hizbollah, with Iran's money, organized and began operating a social welfare system.<sup>58</sup>

Beginning in the 1990's, shortly after President Hashemi Rafsanjani came to power, the Iranian government's financial aid to Hizbollah substantially decreased. It is generally accepted that the reason Iran's aid declined was that the radicals lost their grip on power. Along with the official Iranian governmental support, Hizbollah also enjoys the financial support provided by the Iranian theological leadership. In spite of the fact that the monetary support from the Iranian government has declined considerably over the past few years, from 120 million down to approximately 60 million dollars annually, there is no doubt that Iran still plays an important role in Hizbollah's military activities.<sup>59</sup> Furthermore, the Iranian link also aids Hizbollah in gaining popular support through helping the organization maintain a comprehensive network of social services. The introduction and maintenance of this welfare

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 147.

<sup>59</sup> "Iran's Support for Terrorism: a Review of the Record." Federal Document Clearing House, Congressional Testimony. Testimony of Michael Eisenstadt, March 19, 1996.

system added to Hezbollah's move towards political legitimization. Lastly, there is no doubt that the Iranian assistance was a crucial element in transforming Hezbollah from a small unknown force into large, highly effective, well organized and sophisticated fighting force.

#### **E. ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE**

It has been reported by several sources that Hezbollah has its international headquarters located in Tehran, Iran, regional headquarters in Nabatouaj, operational planning and administrative headquarters in south Beirut. Further, its military training headquarters is located at its birthplace, Baalbek in the Bekaa Valley of Lebanon. It has also been reported that Hezbollah's military wing, which usually operates under the names of Islamic Jihad or Islamic resistance, has 500-700 terrorists in internationally active cells and approximately 5000 militiamen in paramilitary units in southern Lebanon. It is also alleged that Hezbollah has 70,000 plus supporters.<sup>60</sup> What is unique to the organization when compared to Amal, is that Hezbollah has no firm hierarchy. Instead it operates with collective leadership. It has a supreme council which consists of approximately 17 members that make decisions pertaining to administrative, legislative, executive, judicial, political

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<sup>60</sup> Office of International Criminal Justice "Hezbollah", Available [Online]: <http://oicj.acsp.uic.edu/spearmint/public/extremist/hezbollah/index.cfm>, [15 Jun 99].

and military matters. Additionally, it is the supreme council that confers directly with the Iranian governmental hierarchy.

#### F. POLITICAL LEGITIMIZATION

As mentioned earlier, Iran's leadership changed hands in 1989. Upon the death of the hard-line Ayatollah Khomeini, the moderate Hashemi Rafsanjani became Iran's President. As early as 1991 the effect of this Iranian moderation on Hizbollah was apparent when the supreme council of Hizbollah replaced hard-line Secretary General Sheikh Suhbi al-Tufayli with a moderate named Sheikh Abbas al-Musawi that Rafsanjani supported.<sup>61</sup>

Sheikh Musawi was the Secretary General for only two years. During that time, Hizbollah began to adjust its temperament. On February 1992, an Israeli air raid on his motorcade killed him along with his wife, child and bodyguards. Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah was elected as Sheikh Musawi's successor. Sheikh Nasrallah was a moderate and continued to bring the organization into the mainstream.

In the 1990's, evidence of the Iranian moderation carrying over to Hizbollah's agenda was evident when the organization entered the Lebanese political system. Hizbollah underwent somewhat of a political

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<sup>61</sup> "Islam as a Resistance and Solution", Available [Online]: <[http://almaashriq.hiof.no/lebanon/300/320/324/324.2.political\\_parties/hizballah/warn/change.html](http://almaashriq.hiof.no/lebanon/300/320/324/324.2.political_parties/hizballah/warn/change.html)>, [22 Mar 99].

transformation.<sup>62</sup> It participated in the parliamentary elections of 1992, the first to occur in over twenty years.<sup>63</sup> Hizbollah's participation in the 1992 parliamentary elections resulted in their gaining eight parliamentary seats. These eight parliamentary positions combined with four other deputies that ran on the same list as Hizbollah (two Sunni and two Christians) afforded them the opportunity to command the largest single bloc party in the parliament.<sup>64</sup>

Naturally, Hizbollah's participation in the Lebanese political system prompted some resentment from within. Hizbollah's hard-line members were furious with the leadership's decision to participate in the elections. Former Secretary General Sheikh al-Tufayli called upon his supporters to burn down the election polls. In addition, Sheikh al-Tufayli organized his own movement, Ansar Allah (the Partisans of God).<sup>65</sup> Fortunately for Hizbollah, they

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<sup>62</sup> Robert Fisk, "The Transformation of Hizbollah," *World Press Review*, July 1996.

<sup>63</sup> Jaber, 72.

<sup>64</sup> Anthony Shadid. "For Hezbollah, Peace May Not Mean a Victory Movement will Attempt To Find a Place In Lebanese Politics," Chicago Tribune, 19 June 1998, Available [Lexis/Nexis]: NEWS/ALLNEWS [12 April 1999]. Many Christians boycotted the 1992 general elections as a protest to Syrian military presence at the polls. There are 128 available seats in parliament, however only 73 of them were filled during the 1992 election because of the boycott. Hizbollah thus had the largest single party.

<sup>65</sup> "Islam as a Resistance and Solution", Available [Online]: <[http://almashriq.hiof.no/lebanon/300/320/324/324.2.political\\_parties/hizballah/warn/change.html](http://almashriq.hiof.no/lebanon/300/320/324/324.2.political_parties/hizballah/warn/change.html)>, [22 Mar 99].

were able to overcome this dissention amongst some of their members and remain intact.

The move into the Lebanese political arena was contradictory to the movement's stated goals in their 1985 open letter. Hizbollah's Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah and other high ranking members justified their position of entering the Lebanese political system "by arguing that its members had been elected by the people and had not been appointed by the government, which it opposes."<sup>66</sup> Essentially, Hizbollah asserted that in order for the organization to make political changes in the Lebanese system, it had to work from within in order to make and monitor changes.<sup>67</sup>

Along with integration into politics during the 1990's, Hizbollah altered their view on establishing an Islamic Republic. "Despite its Islamic identity and its calls for an Islamic Republic in its manifesto, its deputies have not focused on Islamic issues since they were elected."<sup>68</sup> One of the reasons that Hizbollah has not highlighted the establishment of an Islamic republic in their political agenda is that they realize Lebanon is not the ideal

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<sup>66</sup> Jaber, 73.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Jaber, 210.

setting. In *The Vanished Imam*, Fouad Ajami provides an excellent argument as to why the concept of an Islamic republic of Lebanon is not feasible in Lebanon:

It could rail against the world; it could talk about the establishment of an 'Islamic republic' in Lebanon. But it could not change the nature of that land of rival sects, nor could it overcome the harsh economic limits of a small country that has lived off trade and services. There is no viable agriculture hinterland in Lebanon to sustain a zealous state of the faithful. Unlike Iran, Lebanon has no oil wealth that would accrue to those who fight their way to political power.<sup>69</sup>

#### **G. DEALING WITH HIZBOLLAH**

As expressed earlier, it was the Israeli's unwillingness to depart Lebanon after the PLO was driven away from Israel's northern border that enraged the Shia's and gave birth to Hezbollah. The Israelis would eventually realize that operation Peace for Galilee created an enemy that was more potent than the PLO had been. Unlike the PLO, Hezbollah were indigenous and could not be driven out so easily.

#### **H. ISRAELI MILITARY CAMPAIGNS**

The Israelis have been preoccupied with trying to eradicate Hezbollah through military operations that have essentially backfired. The Israeli military has launched several operations that have only served to strengthen the position of Hezbollah in southern Lebanon and to some extent the rest of Lebanon. In addition, these operations have

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<sup>69</sup> Ajami, 217.

served as a catalyst for Hezbollah to increase their attacks on the IDF and the SLA in the security zone.

Operation Accountability was an example of this, and was a massive military offensive operation launched by the IDF in July 1993, following the killing of several IDF soldiers. It was probably the harshest attack that Israel organized since Operation Peace for Galilee in 1982. The operation resulted in destruction of many civilian homes thus causing the exodus of an estimated 500,000 Lebanese citizens from their homes and villages.<sup>70</sup> Its intended purpose was to neutralize the Hezbollah threat by driving the southern Lebanese civilian population north to Beirut, which in turn was supposed to force the Lebanese and Syrian governments to take action against Hezbollah.

In the eyes of the Israeli government and the IDF, this operation was a huge success because of the damage it inflicted. However, in reality it was not a success for the Israelis because Operation Accountability served to bolster Hezbollah's position among the Lebanese populace. Furthermore, the Lebanese and Syrian governments took no action to halt Hezbollah's armed struggle. Shortly after the smoke cleared from the Israeli bombardment, Hezbollah moved in workers and began to rebuild and repair the damaged

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<sup>70</sup> Douglas MacArthur, "Southern Lebanon and Terrorist Organizations", Available [Online]: <<http://idt.net/~transit1/SyriaIsrael.html>>, [15 Jun 99].

homes and villages.<sup>71</sup> This role of relief provider elevated their status in the Shi'a community and served as a platform for recruiting more young and energetic fighters.

Despite the apparent lessons of Operation Accountability in 1993, the Israelis unleashed another fierce and deadly Operation in April 1996. This operation was codenamed "Operation Grapes of Wrath" and lasted approximately 16 days. Similar to that of Operation Accountability, the intentions of Operation Grapes of Wrath was to destroy Hezbollah's popularity amongst the Lebanese populace. Israel's official claimed objective, as stated by Prime Minister Shimon Peres in his address to the Knesset on IDF operations in Lebanon in April 1996 was, "to ensure a long period of quiet for the communities of the north, to stabilize the situation in southern Lebanon, and to halt the firing of Katyushas...."<sup>72</sup> Prime Minister Shimon Peres failed to mention to the Knesset that the IDF's mission was to create havoc in south Lebanon. Further, the havoc created through intense bombardment was designed to reduce Hezbollah support from the Lebanese people. It had the opposite effect. In an interview, Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, the

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<sup>71</sup> Jaber, 156.

<sup>72</sup> "Address By Prime Minister Shimon Peres To The Knesset On IDF Operations In Lebanon", Available [Online]: <<http://www.israel-mfa.gov.il/mfa/go.asp?MFAH01750>>, [22 Feb 99].

Secretary General of Hizbollah, gave an assessment of the effect of Operation Grapes of Wrath:

They wanted to weaken Hizballah, and Hizballah came out stronger. They wanted to reinforce the idea that Hizballah are terrorists. They wanted to make a split between the people and the resistance. But the resistance is now more popular than ever. They wanted to create internal unrest in Lebanon, but we experienced national solidarity here that we haven't seen in 30 years. None of these goals were achieved. The failure of the enemy is our victory.<sup>73</sup>

Although his assessment may be somewhat of an overstatement, there is no doubt that the Israeli Operation drove the Lebanese populace closer to Hizbollah. Probably the most significant event during Operation Grapes of Wrath that increased Hizbollah's popularity, as asserted by Sheikh Nasrallah's statement above, was the Israeli shelling of the UN refugee shelter located at Qana, Lebanon. The Qana episode convinced many Lebanese citizens that Israel was the enemy and Hizbollah was their only protector. It was reported that the UN refugee shelter housed approximately 800 refugees when it was shelled by the IDF artillery.<sup>74</sup> When the shelling ended, over 100 Lebanese civilians including 24 children had died.<sup>75</sup> Adding fuel to the

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<sup>73</sup> Lara Marlowe, "Cease Fire Does Not Mean Peace; Hizballah's Secretary General Vows Revenge," *Time*, 13 May 1996, 27.

<sup>74</sup> Scott Peterson, "Lebanon Heats Up As Peace Stays Chilled," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 15 October 1997,

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

Hizbollah resistance movement and igniting worldwide criticism, local and international media published numerous articles and pictures that depicted the bloodshed of innocent civilian victims, especially those of the young. Israel has invested heavily in strengthening its position in southern Lebanon but the security zone has been expensive and ineffective in combating Hizbollah.

Syria and Lebanon traditionally have had a strong bond. Syrian ties to modern-day Lebanon have been close for centuries. Under the Ottoman Empire, Lebanon was a part of Greater Syria. After the demise of the Ottoman Empire at the close of World War I, both countries became subject of the French Mandate. It was under the French Mandate that the modern state of Lebanon was separated from the larger entity of Greater Syria. From the date that Lebanon was officially established, Syria has never officially recognized Lebanon's sovereignty and independence. Syria has never given up its implicit claim to Lebanon and the fact that there has never been an exchange of ambassadors serves as evidence.<sup>76</sup> Furthermore, many Syrians believe that Lebanon and Syria are integral parts of Greater Syria that were divided in the interest of the French after World War I.

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<sup>76</sup> Jonathan C. Randal, *Going All The Way* (New York, N.Y.: Viking Press, 1983), 287.

#### **IV. SYRIA: PLAYING A MAJOR ROLE IN LEBANON**

Since the outbreak of the 1975 Lebanese Civil War, Syrian President Hafez Assad has consistently interfered with Lebanon's internal affairs. The Lebanese Civil War was disastrous for the Lebanese people, but would later turn into an advantage for Syria, as it would lead to Syria hegemony. In the early stages of the Civil War, Syria acted as a mediator and arranged several cease-fires. In February 1976, Syria helped formulate a political reform package known as the Constitutional Document that granted more power to Muslims. The reform was never implemented. When Syrian diplomacy failed, the Lebanese President Suleiman Franjieh requested Syrian military intervention in April 1976.<sup>77</sup> Hafez Assad obliged and thus the stage was set for a long, protracted Syrian military presence in Lebanon. Today, Syria maintains approximately 40,000 troops in Lebanon and exerts its influence on government and state policies.

##### **A. DOMINATING LEBANESE POLITICS**

Syria's movement into Lebanese politics surfaced during the midst of the Lebanese Civil War, but its control over

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<sup>77</sup> Al-Assad's main reason for intervening militarily in Lebanon was that he feared the possibility of Lebanon partitioning on sectarian lines. Further, he also feared that an exacerbation of the sectarian issues could have a spillover effect into Syria. For an in-depth assessment see Marius Deeb, *The Lebanese Civil War* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1980).

Lebanese foreign affairs issues began in 1983. It was in late 1982 that Israel persuaded President Amin Gemayel to sign a peace treaty. With the assistance of U.S. mediation, on May 17, 1983, an Israeli-Lebanese agreement was signed.<sup>78</sup> Syria vehemently objected to this agreement, as it required a phased Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon, contingent upon the withdrawal of Syrian and Palestinian forces. Syria had no intention of withdrawing its forces from Lebanon and Hafez Assad "proposed that the agreement would turn Lebanon into an 'Israeli satellite.'"<sup>79</sup> Additionally, Syrian withdrawal would have seriously weakened Syria's position in Lebanon. As a result of Syria's vehement opposition to the agreement, President Hafez Assad made overt threats to renew civil strife in Lebanon and close its border to Lebanese products if the agreement was signed. After the signing of the agreement, Hafez Assad sponsored pro-Syrian factions that also opposed the May 17<sup>th</sup> agreement and the U.S. support for President Amin Gemayel.<sup>80</sup> These pro-Syrian factions caused havoc for Gemayel's government as they used terrorism as the primary weapon. According to Dr. Reuven Ehrlich,

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<sup>78</sup> The May 17<sup>th</sup> agreement was designed to end the state of war and normalize relations between Israel and Lebanon.

<sup>79</sup> Yaniv, 177.

<sup>80</sup> Robert Freedman, *The Middle East: After the Israeli Invasion of Lebanon* (New York, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1986), 305.

The ‘terror weapon’ helped Syria to place its supporters at the top of the Lebanese leadership and to eliminate – physically and politically – those it identified as supporters of the United States and Israel. Syria’s activation of Shi’ite terror together with Iran contributed to: the withdrawal of the multinational force from Lebanon (1984); the withdrawal of IDF forces from Lebanon without a political arrangement and under pressure from terror attacks (1985)....<sup>81</sup>

This Syrian sponsored terrorism forced the U.S. to withdraw its troops from Lebanon, weakening the position of President Gemayel. The U.S. had supported President Gemayel’s government and assisted Gemayel in strengthening the Lebanese Army. With the U.S. on his side President Gemayel was able to avoid falling under the control of Assad. However, when the U.S. withdrew from Lebanon, President Gemayel had no other option and acquiesced to Assad’s demands. On March 5, 1984, Syria succeeded in pressuring President Gemayel to announce that he was canceling the unimplemented agreement with Israel.

#### **B. THE TRIPARTITE ACCORD**

The period from 1983 to 1989 was dominated by Lebanese Syrian negotiations that aimed to establish internal political reforms that would be acceptable to all parties. During 1985 and 1986, internal fighting in Lebanon flared up. The Shi’ite militia Amal became concerned that there was a resurgence of PLO military strength and wanted to

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<sup>81</sup> Reuven Ehrlich, “*Terrorism as a Preferred Instrument of Syrian Policy*” Available [Online]: <[http://www.ict.org.il/inter\\_ter/st\\_syrian\\_terror.htm](http://www.ict.org.il/inter_ter/st_syrian_terror.htm)>, [9 Sep 99].

ensure that the PLO remained weak. As a result of Amal's fear, Amal waged a war on Palestinian refugee camps in Beirut, Tyre and Sidon. This period became known as the "War of the Camps."<sup>82</sup> In search of a solution to the resurgence of factional fighting, Syria began to negotiate the Tripartite Accord among the various Lebanese faction leaders. Although the Tripartite Agreement of 1985 failed to achieve political reforms as proposed, it would later be interwoven into the 1989 Ta'if Accord. Syria again intervened in Lebanese matters in 1990, putting down General Aoun's opposition to the Ta'if accord.

#### C. **LEGITIMIZING SYRIA'S CONTROL OVER LEBANON**

Although Syria's intervention in Lebanon inspired international criticism during the 1970s and 1980s, the 1989 Saudi-brokered Ta'if Accord acknowledged legitimate Syrian interests in Lebanon and thus dramatically reduced international criticism of Syria. The Ta'if Accord marked the end of the Lebanese civil war and laid the foundation for a new Lebanese order under Syrian patronage. The accord focused on restructuring the political system along with disarming the numerous militias.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> William Harris, *Faces of Lebanon: Sects, Wars and Global Extensions* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1997), 46.

<sup>83</sup> The Ta'if accord required a change in the distribution of political power among the various Lebanese sects. The agreement stipulated that there be an equal amount of

In 1990, the political reforms proposed in the Ta'if Accord were passed into law and in May 1991, Lebanon's President Elias Hrawi signed a Treaty of Brotherhood, Cooperation and Coordination with Syrian President Hafez Assad. The treaty pertained to security and economic cooperation between the two countries while undeniably widening the scope of Syrian influence over Lebanon. Furthermore, the treaty gave formal definition to a new era in Lebanese-Syrian relations. It legitimized Assad's dominance of Lebanese affairs. The 1991 Syrian-Lebanese Treaty of Brotherhood clearly stipulated that the two countries would coordinate their foreign policies, meaning that Hafez Assad controlled the domestic and foreign policies of Lebanon.

Syria did not stop tightening its control over Lebanon with this treaty. In fact, Syrian domination would become so pervasive that within a couple of years following the ratification of the treaty:

A cascade of new Syrian-Lebanese accords ensued, mainly for social and economic affairs. Ten agreements were signed between September 1993 and October 1994. Four came at once on 16 September 1993—they included provisions for coordinated agricultural and industrial development, ‘complementarily’ in health matters, freedom of residence

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Muslim and Christian delegates. It also left the presidency to the Maronites, but extended the authority of the Sunni Prime Minister and the Shi'i Speaker of Parliament to counterbalance that of the president.

and movement between the two countries, and 'free movement of capital.<sup>84</sup>

On the surface, it would appear that both Syria and Lebanon mutually benefited from these cooperation agreements. However, when analyzed, it is clear that Syria benefited more. Damascus has imposed most, if not all, of the treaties signed between the two countries, signifying that Lebanon was merely a Syrian satellite state. Furthermore, over one million Syrian workers have flooded the Lebanese job market.<sup>85</sup> Although many of these workers provided a source of cheap labor for the 'reconstruction of Lebanon' under President Hariri, it certainly depressed wage levels for Lebanon's lower classes.

#### D. RELATIONSHIP WITH IRAN

Despite ideological and religious differences between the two countries, a close relationship exists. Although Iran is (as mentioned earlier) Hezbollah's primary financial, spiritual and military sponsor, Syria's provides logistic support. Logistical support for Hezbollah has formed the bulwark of Syria's alliance with Iran. Syria aids Hezbollah by allowing Iran to transport arms through Syrian territory to Lebanon. Furthermore, it has been

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<sup>84</sup> Harris, 294.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid. 295.

reported that Syria provides training bases for Hizbollah soldiers. According to Middle East correspondent Andrew Rathmell, Syria has the ability to influence and control Hizbollah's military activities. In his article, "The War in South Lebanon", Rathmell wrote that Syria's,

... control over the rest of the country means that it sits astride the supply lines and rear headquarters of militias such as Hezbollah operating in the area. Syria can, therefore, influence the level of militia operations in the south by tightening or loosening its controls.<sup>86</sup>

One of the many reasons for Assad's support of Hizbollah is that the dedication and determination of the Hizbollah fighters has made the organization an attractive tool. Hizbollah is Hafez Assad's trump card in Syria's quest for reclaiming the Golan Heights from Israel. Syria has a strong military, but it is clearly inferior to the IDF. Syria views Hizbollah as a profitable surrogate force because it allows Syria the ability to exert pressure on Israel by engaging Israel militarily without the fear of Israeli reprisal. There is no incentive for Assad to stop supporting Hizbollah until Syria regains control of the Golan Heights. President Assad has and will most likely continue to support Hizbollah's military activities against the IDF and the South Lebanese Army (SLA) because it is a part of Syria's effort to exercise leverage over Israel in

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<sup>86</sup> Andrew Rathmell, "The War in South Lebanon" *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 1 April, 1994.

the Middle East peace process by forcing Israeli to withdraw under Syrian terms from Lebanon and Golan.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Israel seized control of the Golan Heights from Syria in the 1967 Six-Day war.

## V. CONCLUSION

### A. TIME TO END THE ISRAELI-LEBANESE CONFLICT

The long and grueling involvement of Israel in Lebanon has taken its toll on all parties concerned. The current Israeli-Lebanese conflict has been ongoing for over 17 years. During that time, the conflict has claimed thousands of casualties. Despite the fact that Israel has the superior military power in the Middle East, time has shown that IDF military operations can be counterproductive. The persisting violence in southern Lebanon, and the mounting casualties illustrates the ill-fated Israeli quest for peace along its northern border through occupation. Israel's military operations directed at eradicating Hizbollah seem to antagonize many Shi'ites into supporting Hizbollah's resistance movement. The continuing presence of IDF soldiers in the Israeli self-declared "Security Zone" of southern Lebanon serves as a catalyst for increased violence.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> It is my opinion that Israel's military cannot win the war against Hizbollah by conventional warfare. Hizbollah fighters use civilians as cover. Further, IDF troops are targets in the security zone for Hizbollah fighters.

Additionally, Hizbollah's ability to fire Katyusha rockets over the security zone has diminished the security zones usefulness as a buffer to protect Israel from attacks. It is my position that withdrawal of IDF troops from Lebanese territory would probably result in the cessation of hostilities. One of the alternatives is the status quo: an indefinite war of attrition with the guarantee of occasional intensive military flare-ups and the deaths of many more IDF soldiers and Lebanese citizens.

#### B. TIME FOR A DIPLOMATIC SOLUTION

There seems to be a unique opportunity at the moment, and another chance may not present itself for a long time. Now that the hard-line Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is no longer in office, the time is ripe to end the Israeli-Lebanese conflict via diplomatic means.<sup>89</sup> We are heading into a new millennium and the Lebanese debacle

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<sup>89</sup> Benjamin Netanyahu served as the Israeli Prime Minister from 1996 to 1999. He was a hard-line politician who believed that Israeli security could not be maintained if Israel relinquished control of the territories occupied since 1967. In addition, he bitterly opposed the Arab-Israeli peace diplomacy as conducted by his predecessors, Prime Ministers Shimon Peres and Yitzhak Rabin. Shortly after taking office, Netanyahu announced his administration's firm position that Israel would not withdraw from the Golan Heights under any circumstances. He then proposed a "Lebanon First" plan. The plan called for Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon in exchange for Syrian guarantees to disarm Hizbollah and ensure peace along the Israel-Lebanon border. With no promise of a reward for Syria, President Hafiz al-Assad rejected the proposal. All subsequent Israeli diplomatic attempts under the Netanyahu administration fell on deaf ears and, as a result, the peace talks with Syria and Lebanon ended in 1996.

has been going on far too long.<sup>90</sup> Furthermore, since Israel has made amends with Egypt and Jordan, and is on track with Palestine, Lebanon is the last active battle front in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The debate over how to resolve Israeli military involvement in Lebanon became a central issue during the 1999 Israeli Prime Minister election. During the election campaign, Barak pledged that, if elected, he would withdraw the IDF from Lebanon within a year. Shortly after assuming the duties of Prime Minister, on July 16, 1999, Barak stated "Israel would only pull troops out of southern Lebanon as part of a broader peace deal with Syria."<sup>91</sup> As emphasized in Chapter IV, Syria is considered to be the main power broker in Lebanon to the degree that Lebanese officials essentially take cues from Damascus. Upon reviewing Barak's July 16, 1999 statement, it appears that Barak understands that the Lebanese government is incapable of negotiating its own agreement directly with Israel. Further, it is evident that a Syrian-Israeli agreement is essential to resolving the Israeli-Lebanon conflict.

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<sup>90</sup> Even Ariel Sharon, the Defense Chief who orchestrated the 1982 invasion now advocates an Israeli withdrawal. See Scott Peterson, "Israel's Security Zone Enters a Twilight Zone," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 16 March 1998.

<sup>91</sup> "Israel/Lebanon/Syria", Available [online]: <[www.statfor.com/meaf/countries/lebanon/news/lebanonnews.htm](http://www.statfor.com/meaf/countries/lebanon/news/lebanonnews.htm)>, [July 21, 1999].

Syrian President Hafez Assad is a shrewd leader who has a strong hold on power and has the ability to sign an agreement with Israel without the fear of domestic repercussions. Thus dealing with Syria following Assad's death entails too many variables and a great deal of uncertainty. With this in mind, Israel should pursue a settlement with Syria now. Assad has made it clear that he will ensure cessation of hostilities on Israel's northern border if Israel returns the Golan Heights to Syria. Syria has approximately 40,000 troops in Lebanon and has the ability to cut off Hezbollah's supply lines to halt much of their resistance efforts.<sup>92</sup> Syria currently allows Hezbollah to maintain its resistance efforts against Israel, but once an agreement is reached, the violence would subside. The window of opportunity for a diplomatic resolution to the Israeli-Lebanon conflict is now. For the greater good of the region and the world, Israel, Syria and Lebanon must end this bitter conflict soon.

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<sup>92</sup> There is speculation that upon the withdrawal of IDF troops from Lebanon, Hezbollah will voluntarily cease its military operations against Israel and focus more on increasing their political presence in Lebanon's government.

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